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Frank G. Wisner Dead; U.S. Intelligence Figure

Frank Gardiner Wisner, 56, a key figure in U.S. intelligence operations for 15 years following World War II, took his life yesterday at his country home and farm in Galena, Kent County, Md.

Mr. Wisner, who had been ill for some time, shot himself with a .20-gauge shotgun in an upstairs room of his Galena home just an hour after he arrived there from Washington yesterday afternoon, Kent County Deputy Sheriff Allan Blizzard reported.

He said Mr. Wisner was already dead of a wound in the head by the time an ambulance arrived at 4:15 p.m. Mrs. Wisner was downstairs when she heard the fatal shot, Blizzard added.

In Naval Intelligence

Mr. Wisner's Washington home was at 3327 P st. nw. and for the last three years he had maintained a law office at 1210 18th st. nw.

Following a brilliant legal career as a young man in New York City and distinguished service as a naval intelligence officer during World War II, Mr. Wisner served in top administrative positions of the Central Intelligence Agency from 1948, just a year after its formation, until August, 1962.

Although CIA officials would not make public Mr. Wisner's work there, one close friend of his described him as "one of the founders of its covert operations . . . one of a half dozen of the most important men in Washington during his CIA career."



FRANK G. WISNER

Honored by Friends

Allen W. Dulles, retired CIA director, under whom Mr. Wisner served for nine years, said yesterday that he was "a very good friend, a man I admired very much and knew very well for many years."

A group of Mr. Wisner's closest friends and former associates who gathered last night in his memory, issued this tribute:

"Frank Wisner, in the most literal sense, gave his life to public service.

"At the very outset of this country's unforeseen and unprepared role as a major power of the world, he was called upon to break new ground of the most dangerous, and for a major power, the most essential kind.

"In fact, he had to meet the long, prepared challenge of the vast Stalinist intelligence and subversion net. Thereafter, for about a decade, he devoted himself totally to one of the most onerous and difficult tasks any American public servant has ever had to undertake.

"This was combined, towards the end of this most important service, with a most acute attack of hepatitis, which he refused to care for because it came at a moment when pressures were very great and the questions to be answered were urgently important — the time of Hungary and Suez.

Broke Under Strain
"The double strain broke Frank Wisner's health. He was thereafter a man struggling 'with a grave illness—struggling bravely, manfully, for a long time successfully, but in the end vainly.

"What never can be broken is the image of Frank Wisner left with those who worked with him. He was brave yet wise, prudent yet strongly determined, and deeply American above all. Among pioneering men who have this not always happy responsibility—the men who must serve their country in obscurity—he will be remembered with Allen W. Dulles and other great names."

Born in Laurel, Miss., in 1909, Mr. Wisner graduated from the University of Virginia in 1931 and received his law degree from Virginia's law school in 1934.

Joined Law Firm
That same year he joined the New York City law firm of Carter, Ledyard and Milburn and became a partner before deciding to join the U.S. Naval Reserve as an intelligence officer in 1941.

He served with the Office of Atomic Services in Africa, the Middle East, Rumania, France and Germany from 1943 until 1946, rising to the rank of Commander. It was during this period that he was spotted by Dulles and OSS chief General William J. Donovan as a man to watch.

Mr. Wisner returned to his New York law career after the war only to leave it again at the call of the State Department, where he served for a year as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Occupied Areas. He then joined the CIA. Survivors include his wife, the former Mary Ellis Knowles, three sons, Frank Jr., now serving with the State Department in a Vietnam province; Ellis, studying at Oxford, and Graham, a student at St. Paul's School, Concord, N.H., and a daughter, Wendy, at Sarah Lawrence College.

Funeral arrangements are not complete, pending the return of Frank Jr. from Vietnam.